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ABBOTT H. THAYER
MEMORIAL EXHIBITION

CORCORAN GALLERY OF ART
WASHINGTON, D. C.

1922



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SELF-PORTRAIT

Lent by the Estate of Abbott H. Thayer

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ABBOTT H. THAYER
MEMORIAL
EXHIBITION

THE CORCORAN GALLERY
OF ART
WASHINGTON, D. C.

*From Tuesday, May 9th, to Wednesday,
May 31st, 1922, inclusive*

HOURS OF OPENING:

ON MONDAYS FROM 12:00 M. TO 4:30 P. M.; ON
OTHER WEEK DAYS FROM 9:00 A. M. TO 4:30
P. M.; ON SUNDAYS FROM 1:30 TO 4:30 P. M.
ON MAY 30TH FROM 10:00 A. M. TO 2:00 P. M.

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THE CORCORAN GALLERY OF ART

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The Gallery desires to express its most grateful appreciation to the following owners of paintings by Mr. Thayer, who have so generously permitted these pictures to be included in the exhibition.

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WELLESLEY COLLEGE

MRS. E. M. WHITING

AN ANONYMOUS LENDER

INTRODUCTION

By VIRGIL BARKER

THE really important personalities of this time, now obscured by dust-clouds of opinions, will stand out sharp and clear when the air has been washed by the rain of years. As the dust is laid, it will become plain past all denial that Abbott Thayer was a personage as monumental and enduring as Monadnock itself. He was so by virtue of certain qualities which, occurring in just the combination they did, would have made him great in any age; in this they made him uniquely great.

To portray him as an important painter is to fall short of the whole truth concerning him. It is more nearly adequate to point out that he was a great soul using paint as his means of communication. Though he was entirely aware of the sheer pleasure of manipulating pigment, his primary loyalty was given to that which it could express—which it must express if he were to labor with it to the end. He never belittled himself in any trivial game of “art for art’s sake”; with him always paint was a language by which to convey something. And the medium gave him most satisfaction when it did not attract attention to itself but allowed the long-pondered conception to shine.

He was spirit-brother to a certain Chinese painter whose work was done before the year 1370. This man, Wang Li, made many studies of Hua Mountain, but for a long time his efforts to paint his “idea” of that mountain came to nothing. Therefore, he says,* “. . . I brooded upon it in the quiet of my

* As translated by Mr. Arthur Waley in *The Burlington Magazine* for August, 1921.

INTRODUCTION

house, on my walks abroad, in bed and at meals, at business, at concerts, in intervals of conversation and literary composition. One day when I was resting I heard drums and flutes passing the door. I leapt up like a madman and cried 'I have got it!' Then I tore up my old sketches and painted it again. This time my only guide was Hua Mountain itself . . ." Had Thayer lived long enough to see those words in print, his own heart would have leapt in sympathy and exultant understanding; for some such psychological experience he must have had with old Monadnock. That is why the susceptible spectator, in looking at his painting, senses in it something more majestic than any momentary aspect of physical nature, a grandeur that has its source in the depths of all being.

It is the same throughout the entire range of Thayer's mature achievement. A bowl of roses in his hands becomes more than a flower-piece; it is a glimpse into the very center of beauty. And Thayer's pictures of human beings do not, like the average portrait, show us people who may or may not be interesting, according as they are known to us or as they exhibit individuality; nor are his figure-pieces mere arrangements to satisfy the eye with the pattern they make on the canvas. Rather do they amaze us with glimpses of what is possible to our human kind at our best—the purity of girlhood, the responsiveness of boyhood, the deep purposiveness of young manhood, the glory of womanhood. The finest line ever penned by Dr. Johnson is,

"Thy soul completes the triumph of thy face."

Thayer's pictures of women triumph in portraying the face and the soul as one. The secret of his angels is that they did not

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come down to us from some far-removed heaven but rose up from the midst of us and sit brooding on the mystery and the splendor of our human life.

With such an attitude towards his art, with such aims dictating the form of his every creation, Thayer succeeded in expressing something above the reach of the majority who paint. In a generation for the most part content with technical proficiency, he went beyond the making of pictures; in an age of painters he was an artist. He brought to bear upon each task the weight and comprehensive force of a great mind. Working always in a style intensely personal, he never cheapened it by exploiting his personality. His paintings are not the clever product of an assertive egotism, but imaginative apprehensions of hidden beauty. He spent his life in rendering not appearances but the reality behind appearances.

The precise aspect under which he visualized that reality may be defined as spiritual nobility. Looking upon the visions which Thayer has bequeathed to us, we respond to them with the feeling which Carlyle wisely praised as good for man—the feeling of reverence. It is only fitting that a fair portion of that reverence should be directed toward their creator so recently among us; but it is better, and more as Thayer would have it, that we should adore the art, the idea in the art, and by emotional contagion share its inspiring power. The finest works of Thayer's hands possess the inexhaustible youth of spiritual beauty; along with the creations of the elder gods of art, they burn upwards—

“Immortal incense out of mortal things.”

CATALOGUE

CATALOGUE OF PAINTINGS

1 WINGED FIGURE

1912

Oil on Canvas: h. 50; w. 38 inches. Signed and dated:

Abbott H. Thayer 1912. *Illustrated.*

Lent by John F. Braun, Esquire.

2 BERKSHIRE HILLS or LANDSCAPE WITH CATTLE 1879

A woodcut of this picture was made by Timothy Cole.

Oil on canvas: h. 24; w. 32 inches. Signed and dated: A. H.

Thayer 1879. *Illustrated.*

Lent by Timothy Cole, Esquire.

3 PASTURE AND WOODLAND

Oil on canvas: h. 27; w. 20 inches. Signed: A. H. Thayer.

Lent by Timothy Cole, Esquire.

4 HEAD OF A BOY

1918

TOWNSEND MARTIN.

Oil on canvas: h. 21; w. 17 inches. Signed: Abbott H.

Thayer.

Lent by George J. Dyer, Esquire.

5 STEVENSON MEMORIAL

1903

Oil on canvas: h. 81½; w. 60 inches. Signed and dated:

Abbott H. Thayer 1903. *Illustrated.*

Lent by John Gellathly, Esquire.

CATALOGUE

- 6 PORTRAIT OF A LADY *About 1920*
MRS. WILLIAM B. CABOT of Boston.
Oil on canvas: h. 39½; w. 32 inches. Signed and dated:
Abbott H. Thayer 190(?) (indistinct). *Illustrated.*
Lent by John Gellatly, Esquire.
- 7 CORNISH HEADLANDS *1898*
Near Saint Ives, Cornwall, England. One of the distant
promontories is perhaps Gurnard's Head.
Oil on canvas: h. 30; w. 40 inches. Signed and dated:
Saint Ives 1898 A. H. Thayer. *Illustrated.*
Lent by John Gellatly, Esquire.
- 8 A BRIDE *About 1895*
Oil on canvas: h. 21; W. 17 inches. Signed: Abbott H.
Thayer. *Illustrated.*
Lent by John Gellatly, Esquire.
- 9 BROTHER AND SISTER *1889*
The artist's daughter MARY and son GERALD.
Oil on canvas: h. 36; w. 28 inches. Signed and dated:
Abbott H. Thayer New York 1889. *Illustrated.*
Lent by John Gellatly, Esquire.
- 10 MOTHER AND CHILD *1886*
The artist's first wife, KATE BLOEDE THAYER, and his son
GERALD, aged two years.
Oil on canvas: h. 36; w. 28 inches. Signed and dated:
Abbott H. Thayer Peekskill 1886. *Illustrated.*
Lent by John Gellatly, Esquire.

CATALOGUE

- 11 PORTRAIT OF A YOUNG LADY 1881
Oil on canvas: H. 20; W. 16 inches. Signed and dated:
A. H. Thayer 1881. *Illustrated.*
Lent by John Gellatly, Esquire.
- 12 GIRL IN WHITE 1888 or 1889
MARGARET GREENE of Boston; a descendant of the painter
Copley.
Oil on canvas: H. 37½; W. 29½ inches. Signed: A. H.
Thayer. *Illustrated.*
Lent by Miss Mary Amory Greene.
- 13 PORTRAIT OF BEATRICE 1902
Oil on canvas: H. 63; W. 32 inches. Signed and dated:
Abbott H. Thayer 1902. *Illustrated.*
Lent by Mrs. Hendrick S. Holden.
- 14 PORTRAIT 1897
BESSIE PRICE.
Clarke Prize, National Academy of Design.
Oil on canvas: H. 28; W. 19½ inches. Signed and dated:
Abbott H. Thayer 1897. *Illustrated.*
Lent by Mrs. Hendrick S. Holden.
- 15 PORTRAIT OF A YOUNG GIRL 1891
MISS MARY HUNNEWELL of Wellesley (MRS. WILLIAMS).
Oil on canvas: H. 44; W. 31 inches. Signed and dated:
Abbott H. Thayer 1891. *Illustrated.*
Lent by the Estate of Walter Hunnewell.

CATALOGUE

- 16 ROSES *About 1897*
Oil on canvas: h. 25; w. 28½ inches. Signed: Abbott H.
Thayer.
Lent by Miss Louise Langdon Kane.
- 17 PORTRAIT OF MISS MATHEWSON *About 1891*
Oil on canvas: h. 24; w. 19 inches. Signed: Abbott H.
Thayer. *Illustrated.*
Lent by William W. Mathewson, Esquire.
- 18 PASSENGER PIGEONS *1863*
Oil on canvas: h. 18; w. 14 inches. Signed: A. H. Thayer
1863.
Lent by Albert Milch, Esquire.
- 19 HEAD OF SHANDY *1901*
Son of Dr. E. Channing Stowell, of Dublin and Marlboro,
N. H.
Oil on canvas: h. 21; w. 19 inches. Signed: Abbott H.
Thayer.
Lent by George S. Palmer, Esquire.
- 20 PORTRAIT (Unfinished) *1908*
ELEANOR FISHER (MRS. LAURENCE GROSE), the artist's
niece.
Oil on panel: h. 36; w. 28 inches. Signed and dated: Abbott
H. Thayer Monadnock 1908.
Lent by Mrs. Bruce Porter.

CATALOGUE

- 21 WINGED FIGURE 1889
Oil on canvas: h. 50½; w. 36 inches. Signed and dated:
Abbott H. Thayer 1889. *Illustrated.*
Lent by Smith College.
- 22 PORTRAIT, LADY IN WHITE 1883
MISS BESSIE STILLMAN.
Oil on canvas: h. 36; w. 28 inches. Signed: A. H. Thayer.
Lent by the Misses Clara F. and Bessie G. Stillman.
- 23 THE SISTERS 1884
MISS BESSIE AND MISS CLARA STILLMAN.
Oil on canvas: h. 54½; w. 36 inches. Signed: A. H. Thayer.
Lent by the Misses Clara F. and Bessie G. Stillman.
- 24 BOY'S HEAD 1919
Oil on canvas: h. 29; w. 22 inches. Signed: A. H. Thayer,
1919.
Lent by the Estate of Abbott H. Thayer.
- 25 SUNRISE—SAN REMO
Oil on canvas: h. 37½; w. 28 inches Signed: Abbott H.
Thayer.
Lent by the Estate of Abbott H. Thayer.
- 26 YOUNG LADY IN WHITE
Oil on canvass: h. 26; w. 20 inches. Signed: Abbott H.
Thayer, Monadnock, N. H.
Lent by the Estate of Abbott H. Thayer.

CATALOGUE

- 27 BABY ASLEEP (A STUDY) 1879
WILLIAM HENRY THAYER, 2nd; the artist's first son.
Oil on canvas: h. 12½; w. 16½ inches. Signed: A. H.
Thayer.
Lent by the Estate of Abbott H. Thayer.
- 28 GIRL ARRANGING HER HAIR About 1909
(Worked on again, 1921). A. E. W. (MRS. GERALD THAYER).
Oil on canvas: h. 25; w. 24 inches. Signed and dated:
A. H. Thayer 1918. *Illustrated.*
Lent by the Estate of Abbott H. Thayer.
- 29 MONADNOCK ANGEL 1920 and 1921
Oil on canvas: h. 91; w. 59½ inches. Inscribed: A. H.
Thayer by E. B. T. *Illustrated.*
Lent by the Estate of Abbott H. Thayer.
- 30 GLADYS About 1905
The artist's daughter.
Oil on canvas: h. 25; w. 23½ inches. Signed: Abbott H.
Thayer. *Illustrated.*
Lent by the Estate of Abbott H. Thayer.
- 31 PROFILE, YOUNG WOMAN About 1906
The artist's niece, ELEANOR FISHER.
Oil on panel: h. 20½; w. 15½ inches. Signed: Abbott H.
Thayer.
Lent by the Estate of Abbott H. Thayer.

CATALOGUE

- 32 PORTRAIT-STUDY *About 1884*
Oil on canvas: h. 29; w. 25 inches. Inscribed: A. H. Thayer
by E. B. T.
Lent by the Estate of Abbott H. Thayer.
- 33 SELF PORTRAIT *1919*
Oil on panel: h. 22; w. 24 inches. Signed and dated:
Abbott H. Thayer 1919. *Illustrated as frontispiece.*
Lent by the Estate of Abbott H. Thayer.
- 34 WINTER SUNRISE, MOUNT MONADNOCK *1919*
Oil on canvas: h. 53; w. 62 inches. Signed and dated:
Abbott H. Thayer 1919. *Illustrated.*
Lent by the Estate of Abbott H. Thayer.
- 35 BOY AND ANGEL *About 1917 to 1920*
TOWNSEND MARTIN, boy in picture.
Oil on panel: h. 61; w. 49 inches. Signed and dated: Abbott
H. Thayer April 2, 1920. *Illustrated.*
Lent by the Estate of Abbott H. Thayer.
- 36 ANGEL OF DAWN *About 1909 (Finished 1918)*
A. E. W. (MRS. GERALD THAYER).
Oil on canvas: h. 102½; w. 62½ inches. Signed and
dated: Abbott H. Thayer 1919. *Illustrated.*
Lent by the Estate of Abbott H. Thayer.

CATALOGUE

- 37 LADY IN GREEN VELVET *About 1910 (Finished 1918)*
 A. E. W. (MRS. GERALD THAYER).
 Gold medal and first prize, International Exhibition, Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, 1919.
 Oil on canvas: H. 49½; W. 37 inches. Signed: Abbott H. Thayer. *Illustrated.*
Lent by the Estate of Abbott H. Thayer.
- 38 PORTRAIT OF ALICE FREEMAN PALMER
 President of Wellesley College, 1882-1887.
 Oil on canvas: H. 50; W. 36 inches. Signed: Abbott H. Thayer. *Illustrated.*
Lent by Wellesley College.
- 39 PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST'S SISTER 1879
 SUE THAYER (MRS. E. M. WHITING).
 Oil on canvas: H. 23; W. 19 inches. Signed: A. H. Thayer.
Illustrated.
Lent by Mrs. E. M. Whiting.
- 40 PORTRAIT OF A BOY 1905
 HENRY THAYER WHITING, the artist's nephew.
 Oil on canvas: H. 24½; W. 22½ inches. Signed and dated: begun 1903 Abbott H. Thayer Monadnock 1905. *Illustrated.*
Lent by Mrs. E. M. Whiting.
- 41 FIGURE, HALF-DRAPED *About 1885*
 Oil on canvas: H. 71½; W. 48 inches. Signed: A. H. Thayer.
Illustrated.
Lent Anonymously.

CATALOGUE

42 STUDY HEAD OF A YOUNG GIRL

Oil on canvas: h. 16; w. 13 inches. Signed: A. H. Thayer.

DRAWINGS

A comprehensive collection of ninety four water colors, drawings and sketches, is included in the exhibition, the individual titles of which are not listed in this catalogue.



ILLUSTRATIONS



(No. 1)

WINGED FIGURE

Lent by John F. Braun, Esquire



(No. 2)

BERKSHIRE HILLS OF LANDSCAPE WITH CATTLE

Lent by Timothy Cole, Esquire



(No. 5)

STEVENSON MEMORIAL

Lent by John Gellatly, Esquire



(No. 6)

PORTRAIT OF A LADY

Lent by John Gellatly, Esquire



(No. 7)

CORNISH HEADLANDS

Lent by John Gellatly, Esquire



(No. 8)

A BRIDE

Lent by John Gellatly, Esquire



(No. 9)

BROTHER AND SISTER

Lent by John Gellatly, Esquire



(No. 10)

MOTHER AND CHILD

Lent by John Gellatly, Esquire



(No. 11)

PORTRAIT OF A YOUNG LADY

Lent by John Gellatly, Esquire



(No. 12)

GIRL IN WHITE

Lent by Miss Mary Amory Greene



(No. 13)

PORTRAIT OF BEATRICE

Lent by Mrs. Hendrick S. Holden



(No. 14)

PORTRAIT

Lent by Mrs. Hendrick S. Holden



(No. 15)

PORTRAIT OF A YOUNG GIRL

Lent by the Estate of Walter Hunnewell



(No. 17)

PORTRAIT OF MISS MATHEWSON

Lent by William W. Mathewson, Esquire



(No. 21)

WINGED FIGURE

Lent by Smith College



(No. 28)

GIRL ARRANGING HER HAIR

Lent by the Estate of Abbott H. Thayer



(No. 29)

MONADNOCK ANGEL

Lent by the Estate of Abbott H. Thayer



(No. 30)

GLADYS

Lent by the Estate of Abbott H. Thayer



(No. 34)

WINTER SUNRISE, MOUNT MONADNOCK

Lent by the Estate of Abbott H. Thayer



(No. 35)

BOY AND ANGEL

Lent by the Estate of Abbott H. Thayer



(No. 36)

ANGEL OF DAWN

Lent by the Estate of Abbott H. Thayer



(No. 37)

LADY IN GREEN VELVET

Lent by the Estate of Abbott H. Thayer



(No. 38)

PORTRAIT OF ALICE FREEMAN PALMER

Lent by Wellesley College



(No. 39)

PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST'S SISTER

Lent by Mrs. E. M. Whiting



(No. 40)

PORTRAIT OF A BOY

Lent by Mrs. E. M. Whiting



(No. 41)

FIGURE, HALF-DRAPED

Lent Anonymously

